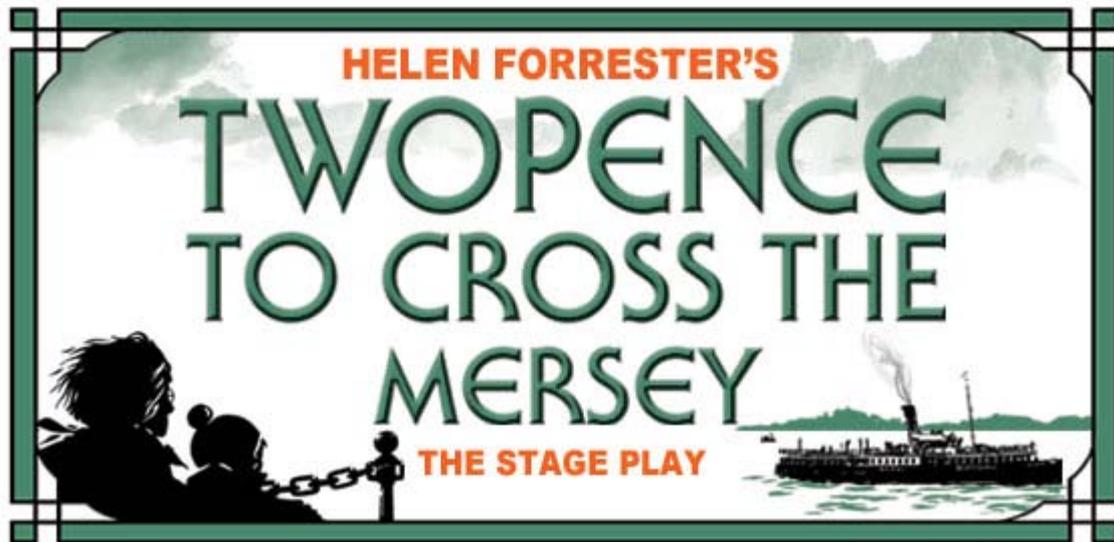


Pulse Records Ltd in association with Bill Elms presents



FORRESTER'S SON FLIES IN FROM CANADA FOLLOWING RAVE REVIEWS

Almost 21 years ago, best-selling author **Helen Forrester** flew from her home in Canada to watch her life story unfold in a musical adaptation of her most famous book, **Twopence to Cross the Mersey**. Now, to celebrate the show's coming of age, her son, **Robert Bhatia**, has made the same journey to see his mother's inspirational memoir come to life in this **brand new stage play adaptation**.

The show opened at the **Epstein Theatre** to rave reviews and standing ovations for performances so far, and the producers have deemed the new format an instant success. The new play will continue to run at the Epstein Theatre until **28th March** before moving on to venues in **Southport, St Helens** and **New Brighton**.

The reviews reached as far and wide as Canada and **Robert Bhatia** sent all the cast a personal message on press night, before flying over to Liverpool especially to see the production. The author's son made a special visit to Liverpool this week with his family to see his mother's story retold on stage.

Helen Forrester's Twopence to Cross the Mersey tells the true story of a young girl and her formerly wealthy family as they are suddenly thrown into poverty during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Leaving behind the nannies, servants and comfortable middle-class life in the South West of England, they uproot their shattered lives and choose Liverpool as the place to start again to rebuild their dreams and fortune. Unbeknown to them however, a terrible shock awaits them.

After witnessing the performance at Liverpool's Epstein Theatre, which received a full standing ovation, **Robert Bhatia said:** "*Rob Fennah and the production team have done a wonderful job of adapting the book to stage. The staging is simple, yet evokes the setting very effectively. The play is faithful to my mother's writing and at the same time it is enriched by the development of the minor characters and the incorporation of some lovely humorous touches*".

Writer and producer Rob Fennah said *"Of course I was apprehensive at the prospect of Helen's son and family sitting in the audience. Whilst the story remains the same, it is a brand new 'straight play' adaptation and completely different in style from the 'musical' version Helen came to see in 1994. Sadly, with her not being with us any more to approve this version, it was very important that her family fully endorsed the new adaptation"*.

Robert Bhatia added *"The strong cast captured the essence of the family and their characters and of those they encountered. One can only put so much detail into a book and the actors do a fine job bringing their characters to life. From the first moment of the play, Maria Lovelady was entirely believable to me as my mother. She balanced the strength of will that Helen demonstrated with the vulnerability that she must have felt. Emma Dears, who played 'Mother' also deserves specific mention as the complex character of my grandmother"*.

The new version is being staged by **Pulse Records Ltd** in collaboration with producer and stage writer **Rob Fennah** and producer **Bill Elms**. They are joined by director **Bob Eaton**. The show will celebrate **21 years on stage**, to the day, when they are at Southport Theatre on **Thursday 9th April**.

Robert concluded *"Our family were all moved by my mother's story brought to life on the stage. We are thrilled that we were able to see the production and very pleased to see Liverpool thriving once more"*.

Follow on **Facebook/TwoPenceThePlay** or **twitter @twopenceplay**

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

TWOPENCE TO CROSS THE MERSEY – The Stage Play

Epstein Theatre

Hanover House, Hanover Street, Liverpool, L1 3DZ

Now running until Sat 28 March 2015

Eves: Mon-Sat 7:30pm

Mats: Wed and Sat 2:30pm

Ticket prices: From £15.50

How to Book: Booking Hotline **0844 888 4411**, visit www.epsteinliverpool.co.uk or book in person at the theatre box office (Open 2-6pm Mon-Thu & 12-6pm Fri & Sat).

Southport Theatre

Promenade, Southport, PR9 0DZ

Thu 9 April – Sat 11 April 2015

Eves: 7:30pm

Mats: Sat 2:30pm

Tickets prices: From £15

How to Book: Booking Hotline **0844 871 3021**, visit www.atgtickets.com/southport or in person at the theatre Box Office.

St Helens Theatre Royal

Corporation St, St Helens WA10 1LQ

Tue 14 April – Thu 16 April

Eve: 7:30pm

Mats: Thu 2:30pm

Ticket Prices: From £18

How to Book: Book in person at the **Theatre Royal Box Office** (Mon – Sat 10am – 5pm).

Alternatively, call **01744 756 000** or visit www.sthelenstheatroyal.com or via **TicketQuarter** on **0844 8000 410** | www.ticketquarter.co.uk or in person in Queen Square, Liverpool City Centre

Floral Pavilion

Marine Promenade, New Brighton, Wirral, CH45 2JS

Sun 19 April – Thu 23 April

Eve: Sun 6:00pm, Mon-Thu 7:30pm

Mats: Wed and Thu 2:30pm

Ticket Prices: From £15

How to Book: Booking Hotline **0151 666 0000**, visit www.floralpavilion.com or in person at the theatre Box Office (Mon-Sat 11am-6pm, Sun 12pm-4pm) or via **TicketQuarter** on **0844 8000 410** | www.ticketquarter.co.uk or in person in Queen Square, Liverpool City Centre

ENDS

For more information, interviews, images, review or competition ticket requests please contact Bill Elms at Bill Elms Associates on 0151 245 0135 or bill@billelms.com.

EDITORS NOTES

Production Partners: Liverpool ONE, Hard Days Night Hotel, TicketQuarter, Pulse Art, Bill Elms Associates Ltd.

Charity Partner: North West Cancer Research

More about Helen Forrester

Helen Forrester was born June Huband in Hoylake, Cheshire (now in Merseyside), the eldest of seven children of inept, socialite, middle-class parents who lived on credit. When her father was made bankrupt during the Great Depression, the family was thrown into poverty. Evicted from their comfortable home in an English market town and with nothing more than the clothes they stood up in, the large family took the train to Liverpool where they hoped to rebuild their lives. While Forrester's father searched unsuccessfully for work, the family were forced to live together in a single room. As the eldest child, the 12-year-old Helen was kept away from school to look after her six younger brothers and sisters. For the next few years the family were forced to rely on meagre hand-outs from the parish, and the kindness of strangers. At the age of 14 Forrester rebelled against her life of drudgery and her parents agreed to allow her to attend evening classes to make up for her missed years of education.

Throughout her teenage years, Forrester worked for a charitable organisation in Liverpool and Bootle, which provided background for her novels Liverpool Daisy, A Cuppa Tea and an Aspirin, and Three Women of Liverpool. After surviving the Blitzing of Liverpool and losing two consecutive fiancés to the Second World War she met and, in 1950, married Dr. Avadh Bhatia; her life with him in India provided background for Thursday's Child and The Moneylenders of Shahpur. The couple travelled widely, eventually settling in Edmonton, Canada, in 1955, where Dr. Bhatia became the director of the Theoretical Physics Institute at the University of Alberta. He was a pioneer in electronic transport theory and the study of diffraction of light by ultrasonic waves. The best-selling memoir of her childhood was Twopence to Cross the Mersey. It was later turned into a successful musical. Living in Alberta provided background for Forrester's novels The Latchkey Kid and The

Lemon Tree. Yes Mama, which takes place mostly in late 19th and early 20th Century Liverpool, also includes a section about Alberta. She died on 24 November 2011 in Edmonton, Alberta.